

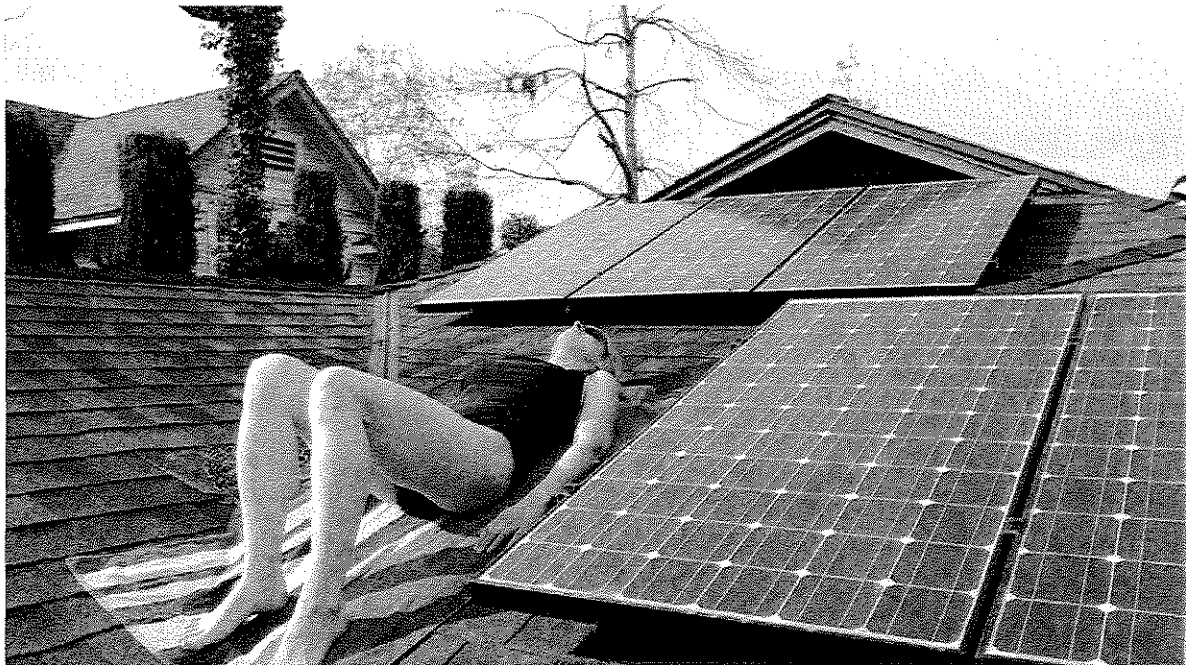
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# PRO/CON: When should Congress make major climate change laws?

By McClatchy-Tribune News, adapted by Newsela staff

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According to the U.S. Department of Energy, about 43 percent of Americans' carbon footprint comes from buildings. Solar-powered electricity is a great option for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, if homeowners can afford it. Photo: Don Kelsen/ Los Angeles Times/MCT

## PRO: Now would be a good time

GREEN BAY, Wis. — In a new report, a group of experts said the Earth is definitely getting warmer. It's based on information from many different sources.

Global warming can cause changes to our climate and weather. These

changes could have a big effect on our lives.

The study also found that humans are probably the biggest cause of climate change. It happens when we burn oil, coal, or gas. When we burn those for fuel it makes greenhouse gases. Those greenhouse gases get trapped in the air. And then they heat up the Earth. And that can change our weather.

But, countries can't agree to lower greenhouse gases. A big climate change meeting just ended in Poland. Not much came out of it. Yet, these gases are dangerous risks to the world's businesses, its environment and people's health.

## Have To Start Somewhere

Not much has happened because of the United States. We produce more greenhouse gases than any other country per person. And we haven't stepped up to take the lead on fixing things.

But China hasn't either. China has been growing quickly and now produces the most greenhouse gases of any country in total.

How could the United States slow down global climate change and make its effects less serious?

Passing a national climate change law would be a good start.

The United States has done things to slow climate change. More than half of the states have made laws. More than a thousand U.S. cities have also. The laws include promoting new fuels made from things like vegetables, instead of oil. And they've passed laws so people don't waste energy. And to get more people to take trains instead of cars.

The Obama government has done a lot too by giving billions of dollars to develop new energy technologies. These new types don't burn oil. Instead, they use sources that don't pollute or run out, such as wind and sun rays.

The government also got car companies to make new cars that go farther for each gallon of gas they use. That way they will burn less gas.

## Showing We're Serious About It

The government is also making rules that should shift the U.S. away from using coal toward cleaner forms of energy.

Yet the new rules are not enough. Our nation needs to pass a big law that affects everyone. Then, other countries might help more.

A national climate change plan would send a strong signal to the world that the United States takes climate change seriously.

But how can our leaders in Washington pass a climate change law when they can barely get along? It is not likely right now. And it won't happen as long as some of our leaders don't believe in climate change. And some of our leaders are good friends with oil companies which don't want people to stop using oil.

But, Congress must try to design a national climate change law. And it should do it soon. It needs to hold hearings, listen to experts and review the evidence.

Congress should use all its tools to find ways to appeal to both sides. Clearly, this will be a hard battle. But, we must try.

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## CON: Later would make more sense

XIAN, China — Our leaders in Congress should not make a big climate change bill in 2014. It would be a waste of time. It doesn't need to. We have already cut by a lot how much greenhouse gas we put out.

And that's without Congress doing anything at all.

Greenhouse gases are what makes the planet hotter. But we are releasing less greenhouse gases now because we started using more natural gas. It's cleaner than oil or coal. And since money has been tight and jobs are scarce, people are not driving so much nor shopping a lot. It means cars and factories are burning less fuel.

Congress shouldn't jump in. They could easily mess things up.

### Cheaper And Better Fixes Later

It's better to wait. Cutting back on greenhouse gasses is expensive right now. Lowering the amount of greenhouse gases will be cheaper in the future when new technologies are invented.

Think about how much cellphones have changed over time. Cellphones used to be the size of bricks and they were only for the rich. Then the technology improved and prices dropped.

Today, many kids have iPhones. That same type of improvement will happen with greenhouse gases. We'll have new technology soon. It will make fixing climate change cheaper and better in the future.

The United States can't stop greenhouse gases alone. And it would cost a huge amount of money. We shouldn't pay for it by ourselves. It will hurt U.S. jobs and businesses.

China and India are growing fast. They're making more greenhouse gasses. Those extra greenhouse gasses would be much more than any cuts we could make now.

For example, the Chinese own far fewer cars per person than the U.S. They even own fewer than we did per person in 1920.

The Chinese will drive as much as us someday. When they do, they'll have 20 times the number of cars they have today. That's because they have so many more people than us.

The Chinese are using a lot more electricity too. New coal power plants are opening there all the time.

### Not During An Election Year

Cutting greenhouse gases by ourselves is pointless. And it would make it harder to reach an agreement with China and India.

Those countries will definitely ask for cuts from the U.S. and Europe. They won't cut their own greenhouse gases without that.

So, we shouldn't cut our greenhouse gases. At least not before an agreement is reached. If we do, we will have to make even more cuts to get China and India to sign on.

Energy affects every part of our lives. So, a law will take careful thought. We need our leaders to put out clear-cut plans. And we need to hear them talk about them in public. Then voters can pick what changes they want to see.

And, leaders in Congress are hardly even speaking to each other. It's not likely they will be able to come to an agreement.

So, Congress won't be able to pass a big law for a while. Also, they're running for elections in 2014. They're going to be busy raising money.

They shouldn't start talking about a bill right before an election. It could result in a really bad law.

What we need is more careful thinking on the matter. We don't need to act fast.

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